

# A Viking's Life

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Summary: This project will be a collection of one-shots, infusing the story of Hiccup and his village with bits of Old Norse lore and mythology, giving a insight in the daily life of a Viking.

## 1. The Tale of Ragnarök

My first in a collection of stories. Read my profile for a better explanation of my plan with these fusion between the movie and "real" lore and facts about the Norsemen and there way of life.

This chapter is about the tale of Ragnarök, told by the village elder Gothi. It's a Viking's favorite story, and everyone is excited to hear it - everyone but Hiccup. Something troubles him deeply. What is it, and will Astrid be able to drag it out of him?

\* \* \*

><p>"And so, Ragnarök will come to pass!" The voice of the village elder, Gothi[1], was light but intense. Standing before the bonfire, they could all see her round, old, but kind face. Her shining eyes wandered among the uplifted faces of her audience, while her small body seemed to be surrounded by the glowing light of the raging fire. The teenage gang, along with the other children of Berk, were all sitting before her in a wide semicircle under the evening sky. It was a clear, warm and calm evening, and the stars where glimmering brightly. Mani[2], the moon-god, was looking down on them, and somehow the moon seemed closer than ever.</p>

"The sign has been given,"she continued, wildly gesturing with her right hand, the left one clinging to the staff on which she was leaning. She was standing over a seated audience, yet her small stature put her at an almost face-to-face height with her listeners.

"The three roosters will crow. Fjalar will crow in the forest of Galgvior, in Jotunheim, the land of the giants," she continued, pointing beyond their heads as if she knew where the giants

dwells,

"The golden rooster Gullinkambi will crow in Valhalla, in Asgard." She raised her hand slightly to the sky, marking the mountain where Odin dwells.

"And the third, unnamed rooster, will crow in Hel[3]." Letting her hand fall, she marked the underworld. "The roots of the world tree Yggdrasil will finally give way, and the whole world will shudder in earthquake." She swept her hand above the heads of the audience, as if pointing out the whole world around them. Her voice was a spell of excitement and wonder. This was indeed the favorite tale for all Vikings. All except one.

Hiccup was sitting in the outset of the audience. He shifted uncomfortably. His prosthetic leg, a still new part of his life for him, wasn't the only reason for his unease. Fishlegs, sitting beside him, on the other hand, was just as caught up in the story as everyone else was. He leaned forward, as if shortening the distance would make him be able to hear better. His mouth was open and his eyes were sparkling.

"And with the trembling of the world, the terrible wolf, Fenrir, will at last be free from his bonds. The huge Midgard serpent, Jormungand, will awake and burst out from the depth of the ocean, making the sea roar in an overwhelming storm. And carried on the storm, the evil ship of Naglfar[4], made up completely of the fingers and toenails of those who have died, will come. On it will the giants invade Midgard!" Gothi let a dramatic pause sweep over the crowd. The younger children shivered once more, and many of them looked at their fingernails, trying to imagine them made into a ship. With a hidden smile, she continued.

"From the realm of Hel, a second ship will sail, with Loki as its chieftain. And from the realm of Muspellheim, the fire giants, led by Surt, will march forward." The intensity grew; they all knew that their favorite part was about to come. Gothi paused yet again, straightening her back to become a whole three centimeters taller before continuing.

"And then, the power of the gods will assemble to meet the invaders. With Heimdall blowing in his mighty horn, Gjallarhorn, the armies of Asgard will march out to meet the forces of darkness and fire. And the gods, mighty as they are, will not stand alone in this desperate hour. With the gods, every noble Viking that were dwelling in the halls of Valhalla and on the fields of Folkvangr will follow[5]. For you see, Odin, the all-seer, created us Vikings for this purpose, so that we who have proven ourselves to be worthy and honorable will stand beside him on the last and ultimate battle against the shadow." The crowd awed, imagining the honor and glory of marching side by side with Odin to war. Many of them had heard this story before, but it still made the same impression as the first time this thought crossed their mind. Every one of them, even the girls, were certain that they would be there, marching along the gods to their destiny.

Here Gothi made a little edition of her own to the tale: "And imagine us, the strong Vikings of Berk, riding our dragons to war. We will be an elite force of the sky, worthy of remembering in song and tales." The thought of using Berk's newly founded friends as a means of war

was new. It had been spoken in the past between the chieftain and the leaders of Berk, but that was mostly as a means of defense. The idea that the dragons might accompany their riders even after death, to the very fields of the last battle, was controversial.

The old priestess smiled. The children would take this thought home with them, and it may spark an argument in the village. But she was the village elder, and she did not fear nor mind a debate on such things.[6]

Fishlegs nudged his elbow in Hiccup's direction when the subject of dragons came up, meaning to hint to him that he and his Night Fury would be the ones leading the Vikings. . But he found himself striking at thin air. The spot next to him where Hiccup had been just a moment before was empty. He looked around to see where the boy might have gone, but as Gothi continued, he was pulled back into the spell of the story.

"On the plains of Vigrid, a plain that is a hundred miles long and a hundred miles wide, the forces of good and evil will clash, and with a tremendous roar that will shake the foundation of the world, the final battle will begin!" Gothi slammed her staff into the ground, almost shouting the last part, and all who listened jerked back in alarm and excitement. As the tale dragged on, she told them of how Odin, who had already foreseen his fate, would be the first one to charge. He would be swallowed whole by the wolf Fenrir, causing the rest of the gods and forces of Asgard to charge in anger and fury. Odins son, Vidar, would avenge his father by breaking the jaws of Fenrir. She told of Thor, who would battle the huge Midgard serpent Jormungand, and with the might of his hammer, Mjolnir, he would slay the beast. But he himself would be poisoned by the foul beast's teeth and will only take nine more steps before collapsing.

And on she went, explaining how the powerful gods of Asgard and the heroic Vikings will fight the giants and their allies. In the end, the battle would consume all, to the point when the leader of the fire giants, Surt, will start a tremendous fire that will cover most of the world. They all gazed at the elder with sparkling eyes. A glorious battle that would consume everything, now that was something. The story was almost at an end, and the fire behind the elder had started to slumber. There was silence as the audience went through what they had heard.

"But have no fear young children,"she added, quite unneeded since most of the children didn't fear this at all. On the contrary, they longed for the chance of joining the army of the gods.

"This is not the end of everything,"she explained, "The earth will be overflowed by the sea as the battle ends. And with the water passing away, a clean earth will appear. There will be survivors, some of the younger gods, the sons of Odin and Thor and others; they will survive Ragnarök. They will start to rebuild the world, a world free of evil. And with them, a few humans will survive as well. They will be the chosen ones to repopulate the earth and rebuild Midgard[7]." No one said it; no one had ever mentioned who those chosen ones were. But for generations, there had always been a understanding among the young ones of Berk that it had to be the strongest, most clever and powerful among them, for it had to be the Vikings of Berk.

And with that, Gothi ended her tale, giving them all a warm smile and

some words of wisdom before she went out of the firelight and away in search for a bucket of water. Storytelling can be make one quite thirsty.

While the smaller children started to disband in search for their parents, the teen-gang remained to talk about the story.

"The survivor, its gonna be me,\*\*\*said Tuffnut, leaning back onto a barrel behind him with his head cradled in his hands. "Its my destiny,"he added with a smirk of his face.

"You? The survivor of RangarÃ¶k? Ha!" bursted out Snotlout, slapping the blond boy by his side.

"Yeah, I mean what makes you think you'll be the one?" added Fishlegs.

"I told you, its my destiny. I just know these things. Who else has the strength?" To this both Snotlout and Fishlegs objected.

"Of course Astrid will be the girl who survives,"continued Tuffnut, and to that none had anything to object. "So it will be our duty to 'repopulate' the earth." A hard laughter broke out in the group. Unfortunately for Tuffnut, the girl in question had been sitting just a few steps away with his twin sister Ruffnut, engaged in a girl-to-girl chat, and they had overheard the whole thing. Ruffnut would have thrown herself over her brother, starting yet another twin-fight, if it weren't for Astrid. As she stood up and walked over to the boys, Fishlegs and Snotlout, being the first to see her, fell into silence and quickly pointed at Tuffnut as if to say, "He said it!" No one dared to move or say anything as Astrid came up on Tuffnut's side. Looking up, he jumped to his feet in surprise.

"Oh, Astrid, We where just..." \*Bam\*

Tuffnut was twisting on the floor with both hands shielding his broken nose. They wouldn't hide nor hinder the blood that was now pouring out, though.

"OWW! OH OW! YOU BROKE MY NOSE!"he howled to the night sky. Astrid just gave him a frown and turned to the spot where Hiccup had been. It was then that she realized for the first time that the spot where Hiccup had been sitting during the story was empty.

"Where's Hiccup?"she asked, half to herself and half to the group. No one had noticed him leave, and right now they didn't really care, they where far too occupied laughing over the misfortune of the twisting teen on the ground.

"He went away," was all Fishlegs managed to say before joining Snotlout, standing over Tuffnut with a "who's the survivor now?" face.

Hiccup had made his way back to Gobber's shop sometime during the middle of the story. He had heard it before; it didn't thrill him back then and it certainly didn't thrill him now.

Gobber had already left for the night, but there was still a glow in the forge that kept the little house warm and let out a red light to chase the shadows away. Hiccup sat on the table, letting his leg and

prostheses dangle free in the air while he fingered his little dagger. It was small, and hardly satisfying of a weapon in time of danger. But Hiccup didn't use it as a weapon. He didn't need one. Somehow, he always thought that if he should be in danger, Toothless, his father, or someone else from Berk, maybe even Astrid, would be there to help him. And he didn't feel comfortable bearing weapons. With this dagger he could cut rope, carve wood, get a slice of bread, or something simple and peaceful that did not have a violent purpose.

His eyes followed the edge of the blade, but his mind was not present; it was far away, deep in his thought. He looked troubled.

Toothless was there, too. He had been watching the gathering around the bonfire from afar, but he had not been allowed to join them. Something about him being 'too big'. And as soon as Hiccup had snuck away from the group and started limping away down the street, Toothless had followed him, letting Hiccup put a hand around his neck to support himself as they made their way to the forge. Hiccup didn't always need support when he walked around. In fact, he walked mostly on his own by now. But when he was tired, or in a low spirits, strength seem to escape his leg and Toothless was quickly there to give him a helping hand, or neck.

He could tell that his rider was unhappy, although he didn't know why. He did his best to cheer his friend up. Sneaking up on the table the best he could, though not very stealthily since the whole table seemed to tremble beneath his weight, he put his nose to the boy's bent neck and made two quick sniffs before releasing warm, moist air. This he knew would always make him laugh. He had found this weak spot of his friend's by accident one evening at Hiccup's house, when the boy had been sitting on a footstool by the fire drawing a new version of his prostheses. The dragon had come up behind him, looking over his head to see what he was doing and accidentally released a bit too much air down his neck. This had made the boy laugh, making him misdraw a line. Toothless tried it again, and Hiccup had to put down the pencil, he was twisting too much. He tried it a third time, and the boy had gone nuts.

It always seemed to work, and Toothless hoped it would make him laugh once more. Hiccup did, but it was more of a reflex, and he was quickly back to his depressed state.

"Sorry bud, I'm just not in the mood tonight." He gave the dragon a light pat before turning back to his thoughts.

Astrid was heading towards the forge. If you wanted to find Hiccup - if he wasn't flying around on Toothless - that was the place to look. She was a bit frustrated why he had left without a word. They hadn't seen each other for a while, and he had promise her they would spend some time after the storytelling.

She could tell that he was inside by the light escaping through the windows, but it was far too quiet. Standing in the doorway, she could see Hiccup sitting on the table, spinning his small dagger in his hand, while Toothless was standing by the fire, his ear bent backwards as he looking worriedly at Hiccup. As the dragon turned to Astrid, he lit up and his ears popped up, knowing she could make Hiccup normal.

"Hi there," Astrid said gently as she entered the forge, "You okay?"

Hiccup looked up from his dagger to see Astrid, giving her a quick glance before turning his focus back to his dagger.

"You seem troubled. Something on your mind?" she continued.

"No, its nothing. I'm fine" he said hardly any convincing.

"Look, if this is about what Tuffnut said, you shouldn't pay attention to that."

"What did Tuffnut say?" Hiccup asked, a bit confused.

"Oh, you didn't hear... Well, then what is it?"

"I told you, its nothing."

"Well, you seem quite depressed for 'nothing'."

"I said I'm fine." He jumped down from the table, trying to find something that he could focus his attention on.

"And I can tell you're not, now talk to me."

"No, its noth"-

"Hiccup."

"What!" There was a light tone of anger in his voice. Astrid could tell he was getting frustrated and she wondered if she should press this any further.

"Alright, then don't talk to me. Be like that if you want to." She turned her back to him with her arms crossed, but that only made him more frustrated.

"I just don't like listening to that story."

"About Ragnarök? Why not?" She turned halfway, but still marked that if he didn't want to talk to her, she wouldn't face him.

"Because, I don't like it." He answer, unwilling to say any more.

"Every Viking likes that tale." She said with a bit confusion.

"Well, I don't." He half looked away.

"Why not?" She was facing him once again.

"Just... because" He said again, still reluctant to give her any more.

"Because what? Will you just tell me." She was getting frustrated to by this game of chasing the answer and couldn't hide it in her voice.

Hiccup frustration exploded, and he just gave up any preservation. "I just don't like it okay! I hate it! I fear it!" The last word slip out before he could stop himself, a heavy silence broke out between them. Hiccup looked away, ashamed, like he thought what he had just said would make Astrid bust out in laughter. Astrid, on the other hand, tried to absorb what she had heard. Hiccup feared...death? Vikings learned at an early stage that death is natural and is nothing to be feared. In fact, an honorable death is desirable. A normal Viking knew that, but then again, Hiccup had proven over and over again that he wasn't 'normal'. She needed to try to comfort him, - she wanted to, but she knew that this wasn't her strongest asset. The whole 'talk about your feelings' was still new to her.

"Hiccup..." she started, not sure how to continue.

"I know, I know," Hiccup sighted heavenly, "I know death shouldn't be feared."

"Yeah, it's kind of pointless worrying about it." She wanted to slap herself the moment she said it. Way to go, Astrid.

"And I mean, it isn't like this is the first time you've heard the tale of Ragnarök. We've heard of it all our life and..." She stopped, realizing this was not much better than the comment before.

"Yes, I know but... that was before. It was different then," Hiccup answered.

"Because?" she asked, sensing that somehow she just might get him to talk after all.

"Because, before I... I didn't have anything to lose. Back then I thought nothing of death or of Ragnarök more than an end of...of misery." This made Astrid quite puzzled and she didn't know what to say. All she could do was blink.

"Back then I never thought I would see Ragnarök, or if I did, it would be as the reserves in the army of Asgard. I pictured myself alone in a corner of the battlefield, waiting to be smashed by some giant or consumed by the fire or Surt. Death and Ragnarök were... I didn't think I would mind it...It would just be the end. And... and I wouldn't have minded the end."

"...But?" She still wasn't sure what to say, but she looked for eye-contact, as she wanted him to continue, to know he could trust her with his feelings.

"But now I do." He looked up at her, and their eyes met. "Now everything is different. I have Toothless, and I love him. It feels like me and my father have finally found each other after so long. It feels like if I won back my tribe, and I have... I have..." He hesitated.

"You have me," she finished, more of a statement than a question.

"I have you...and all this," he gestured to everything around him, as if he somehow could sum up everything in his life in a single sweep. "I don't want to lose it."

"But you won't," Astrid said, finally able to speak, "We're together now, all of us. Nothing lasts forever, that's the way things are." To that, Hiccup's eyes saddened once more, and he looked down. "But as my grandfather used to say: there is no end, only new beginnings. And Hiccup, Ragnarök is far, far away, you know that. It will be a hundred years of shrinking summers, and three years of constant winter before Ragnarök will come to pass.[8]"

"I know, but it will come."

"And when it does, it will be a small price to pay for what we have right now," she finished. To that Hiccup had no answer. His fears had always lied in the distant before him, fear of losing and fear of being left alone again. But he wasn't alone. And when he thought it over, what he had today, he was willing to pay dearly to keep just a little longer.

"Besides, didn't you hear Gothi," she added, "There will be survivors, and...I am sure we will be one of them."

"You will. Not me. I'm still weak and clumsy and..."

"But Hiccup, it's different now."

"No, it's not. That's where you are all wrong. You think I'm some kind of strong, powerful hero, but I'm not! I'm still the same person I was before I defeated the Red Death, before the dragons."

"Yes, you are the same, but Berk has changed. We have changed," she said, her voice strong and forcing herself to keep eye contact with him so he knew that she was sincere. "And you said it yourself, you're not alone anymore. You have us, you have your tribe, the mighty Stoick the Vast behind you. You have Toothless, a powerful Night Fury, and with whom you defeated the largest and most dangerous dragon known to Vikings. Just imagine what you can do to the giants. And you have...me. And I will stand beside you. Together we will aid the gods and defeat evil. And when it's all over, I'm sure that we will survive." She was so sure on this that she almost convinced Hiccup on the spot.

"Just think about it, who else will ever be able to escape the consuming fires of Surt?" she continued, "Us, riding on the backs of dragons above the accursed flames. You've already escaped fire before."

"Well, most of me" Hiccup added, trying to make it a joke.

"And we'll do it again."

Hiccup sighed. He still had his doubts about certain things, but the words Astrid said did ease his worries. Maybe she did have some points, and it is really was no good worrying about the future.

"Well, I need to go - chores to do before I can call it a night," she said suddenly. She didn't want to leave, but she knew that if she didn't do what needed to be done back home, she wouldn't be allowed to see Hiccup again for a long time. It was the lesser of two evils, she reasoned. And she guessed he needed some time alone to think this

over. If he still had doubt tomorrow, she was just have to force him to believe her.

"Oh yeah, good point. Well, thanks for"- he was interrupted by Astrid, grabbing him by the shirt and leaning forward. She rested her check on him, clinging on to the moment, before giving him a long peck on the check.

"I'm glad we had this talk,"she whispered in his ear. And with that, she turned, heading for the door.

"Ast... Astrid?"

With a hand on the door-frame she looked back. "Yeah?"

"...Thanks." She smiled warmly at him, and he found himself smiling back. And with that, she left the shop. But as Hiccup sat down again on the table, she popped her head through the window.

"And one more thing." Hiccup looked up, a bit confused at her. "When we do survive Ragnarök, it will be our duty to repopulate the earth." And then she was gone, leaving a stricken dumb Hiccup behind. He just sat there, blushing more than ever as if his brain had exploded. Suddenly a big shadow appeared behind him. There was two quick sniffs, and then a wet nose sent warm moist air down his neck. It made the boy burst out into pure happy laughter as he hugged his dragon.

\* \* \*

><p>Footnotes:</p>

1: Gothi, Dreamworks name for the elder of Berk, is an Old Norse word for "priest"

2: Mani is the Old Norse name for the (first) moon god

3: Hel is the name for the daughter of Loki, who dwells in the underworld where punished souls are banished. Therefor the realm itself has also been given the name Hel.

4: Not kidding, this is Old Norse for "nail-ship," the ship that will bring the giants to Midgard. It is believed to be made by the nails of those who dies, and whose corpses are defiled by the giants as there souls moves on. Viking often cremated there dead (not saying this is the reason why), but it is known that sometimes Vikings would remove the nails from a dead body, if cremation couldn't be done, to prevent the ship of being finish.

5: A common misunderstanding is that every Viking that dies and comes to Asgard will be gathered in Valhalla. This is not so, Odin will take half, while the other half will go to the goddess Freyja. A goddess in both love and war.

6: Actually very little is said about the dragons and their part in Ragnarök. Jormungand is the only sea dragon/serpent to be mentioned, and he was a child of Loki.

7: Now the real tale tells of just two, a man and a woman, Lif and Lifthrasir. But for the sake of the story I changed this.

8: As it is foretold, and with global worming I guess Ragnarök is still far away :)

\* \* \*

><p>There, my first attempt. Please review and let me know what you think about how I try to blend the two worlds. Is it a good idea, should I continue make more? Any thoughts are appreciated.</p>

Now I know this version of Ragnarök has been cut down a tiny bit to fit the story, telling it in its full would take to long time. But beside the little changes I made myself, which I have marked in the text, this is the real Ragnarök as it is told here in the ancient Viking home of Sweden, and I have tried to stay as true to it as I can. If you have any questions about it, or anything ells concerning Vikings for that matter, feel free to send me a PM, I would love that.

And I want to point out for those of you who is picky with spelling of names. I might sometimes mix up Old Norse with the Swedish way of spelling, but related as they are it shouldn't be more then a letter or two that differ.

If you do like the chapter, a lot of credits should go to my beta-reader LadyLore56, she has been a true blessing send from Freyja herself.

## 2. I hereby name Thee

"And for your bravery and heroic deeds, I hereby name you, "Hiccup the Magnificent!" Stoick's large, strong voice echoed over the crowed. Hiccup was standing atop a high hill under a clear afternoon sky and a bright burning sun. Beside him to his right was Stoic the Vast, to his left was Gobber. The hill was surrounded by a sea of Vikings. Everyone from the village was there, all cheering and screaming his name.

"And to mark your astonishing accomplishment, let it be know that on this very hill a rune stone will be raised, and the tale of Hiccup the Magnificent shall be carved into it for all to see, a mark in history that will last until the end of Midgard!" Stoick declared to a roar of approval from the Viking-sea around them.

The crowed suddenly shifted, the gap between them somehow stretched, and out from the front of the crowd, Astrid appeared. Holding out her arms, she ran towards him with a light cry, "Oh Hiccup, my Hiccup." Hiccup smiled goofily, holding out his own arms he waited for her embrace. But hardly had she reached half-way up the hill, when the world seemed to tremble and become dizzy, and things around him seemed to lose shape. Some invisible power was forcing Hiccup's head slightly to the left, and it felt like someone was pressing a cold, wet piece of meat against his cheek. Then the mysterious force was gone, and the cosmos reshaped the world around him to order. But just as he could see the shape of Astrid once more, it was back again, an even stronger doting on his head, and a wet feeling all over his face. And then the world dissolved, and everything around him faded away.

Slowly Hiccup opened his eyes, and a new world took shape around him: the real world. His dream lingered in the back of his mind, but already he had forgotten much of it. As he looked up, another pair of eyes, much larger, greenish-yellow ones, stared back down at him. The sight of Toothless' face became clear, and the mystery of the wet feeling was solved. For as soon as Toothless realized his friend was waking, he was back to dotting his nose against Hiccup's right cheek, licking and purring to get him to wake up.

"Morning, buddy," Hiccup greeted, and as the doting got more intense, he dragged out his arms from under the blankets to try to hold the dragon's face back. Another long lick across his entire face wiped the last remnants of the dream away, and he suddenly remembered: Today was the day he had promised Toothless a whole day of flying and playing.

Lately he had been so occupied in the forge. As the bond between Vikings and dragons grew, the need to supply metalwork for rebuilding houses or sharpening weapons had shrunk drastically. But with the knowledge of how to train a dragon, the orders of new equipment and saddles had begun pouring in, not to mention repairs for whatever the dragons accidentally set to flame. The long days and even longer nights at the forge had its price: he couldn't spend as much time with Toothless. And when he did have spare time, Astrid always seemed to beat Toothless there to occupy it. The dragon had grown restless, and with restlessness, came trouble\*\*.\*\*

So this morning, Hiccup had taken the day off. Today he was all Toothless'. So by scooting Toothless to the side, he got up, put his prosthesis on after some fumbling, and went to make a small breakfast. He still found it hard to put on his own cloths, and even harder asking his father for help. So when Stoick didn't notice, he just slept in his pants, removing the trouble of taking his prosthetic on and off.

His father seemed to be out on errands, as always. He took what was left of his father's breakfast, prepared a bigger dinner that they could consume later, and made him and Toothless ready for the day. A picnic-bag had already been made the evening before, and was waiting by the door. In this, he stuffed the food before heading for the door. As soon as they were outdoors, Hiccup set the bag on Toothless' back behind the saddle in a special holding device he had constructed just weeks before. It was a warm, shining morning, not too of strong wind, and a perfect day for flying.

As he and Toothless glanced over the village, he noticed, just a stonethrow away down the hill, Ruffnut and a blue Deadly Nadder. He recognized the dragon right away. It was Astrid's dragon, and if the Nadder was there, it almost certainly meant that Astrid was there, too. And right he was, as the dragon took a step back he could see that it wasn't the dragon Ruffnut was facing, but the girl that for so long had taken up much of Hiccup's thoughts. He started down the hill towards the girls. He was stopped, however, by Toothless, biting on his neck and holding him back, slightly irritated.

"I know, bud, I know, we're just going to say hi, and then we'll be heading off, okay?" Hiccup said gently, giving the dragon a pat on the head before turning back to the girls. Toothless gave him a sound that Hiccup could only guess was a groan.

Hiccup observed the two girls as he approached. They seemed to be talking about something. He observed Astrid's hair - her beautiful hair - held in her metal hairband. He observed her graceful arms, that she now crossed over her breast. He observed her angry face, with eyes that could be sending lightning, and her...wait a sec - angry face, flashing eyes, arms crossed...

"Oh, man." The worried words escaped him as he and his dragon stopped in their tracks. He had seen that face before. Ruffnut had probably said something she shouldn't, and was now holding up her hands in defense, yet Astrid was furious.

"Maybe we should say hi later, huh?" he said quickly, looking around for a place to hide. Unfortunately for him, Astrid frowned at her friend and looked aside, marking her emotional distance, and therefore noticed the boy up ahead.

"Hiccup! Get over here!" Her voice was keen and commanding. There was nothing he could do but obey, especially if he didn't want to meet an even greater fury later. As they approached the girls, he put on a kind, but somewhat nervous smile.

"Good morning," he greeted. Ruffnut gave an answering nod, but Astrid just waved the greeting aside with her hand.

"Yeah, yeah, listen. The nut here"- to which Ruffnut sighed tiredly- "thinks that the name I've chosen for my dragon is \_funny!\_" Astrid said, with another angry glare at the blonde girl.

"I said it was a good name!" Ruffnut defended herself, but Astrid just waved that off too.

"For you - and don't pretend you didn't laugh," she continued, before looking at Hiccup. Her hard glare made him want to shrink. "So tell me, Hiccup, do you find it funny?" It was a difficult spot, he knew that anything but a no would mean certain destruction, if Toothless didn't save him first. But if it indeed was funny, Hiccup wouldn't be able to hide it.

"So, ehm...what did you name her?" he asked, and a curious tone came into his voice. Fear aside, he was interested to know. Naming dragons had been a hot topic and a common problem in the village lately.

"Oh... right..." Her irritation at Ruffnut had blinded her to the fact that she had yet told Hiccup. She meant to tell him first, but he wasn't around then she looked for him the day before and now it had just slipped out of her.

"I named her... Ærni[1]," she finally stated, a flicker of shyness crossing her eyes before her stouthearted mind took control once more. Hiccup was a little astonished by the choice of name, his eyebrows disappearing under his bangs in surprise.

"I..." Hiccup wasn't sure what to say, but he found in these situations that honesty often turned out for the best. "It's...a wonderful name. I'm just a little astonished, and shameful that I couldn't come up with a name like that myself." Astrid smiled warmly at him, any trace of anger had disappeared from her face.

"Thank you," she said, closing the gap between them. Ruffnut sighed.

"Will you two just get a room already? Anyway, I'm off, see you around." And with a nod, she was on her way. As she disappeared, Astrid and Hiccup turned to each other, while both their dragons seemed restless behind them.

"So, where you off to, the forge?" Astrid asked to start a conversation. Before Hiccup could answer, Toothless was back to nibbling his hand, urging him to be done already.

"No, I promised Toothless I would spend some time with him, so I got the day off. Not that we don't see each other every day and all, but we haven't had time to go flying as much as he and I want to. Look, we even made a picnic bag." He pointed to the bag strapped on Toothless' back. He rambled a little about how he wasn't slacking, this was an investment of time, but Astrid shut him up by pressing her finger to his mouth.

"I think it's a great idea. You deserve some time off after all you've done for the village."

"You... ehm... wanna come?" he asked a little shyly. Asking Astrid out was still hard for him.

"I would love to," she said, and Hiccup lit up, "But I can't. I, on the other hand, don't have the day off." And his light faded. "You should go. Have fun, be with your dragon." With a peck on the cheek, Astrid turned to her dragon, Ærni, as she now was called, and they headed down the road to whatever their business was for the day.

Finally Hiccup turned to Toothless. "Alright buddy, lets go." He mounted, and hardly had he set his prosthesis into the pedal that guided Toothless' mechanical fin, before the dragon took a spring into the air.

Hiccup dismounted as Toothless touched the ground in the cove, where they first had befriended each other. Hiccup lifted the picnic bag off Toothless' back and set it on the ground, throwing a couple of fishes on the ground in front of Toothless. As the dragon started chewing on his ration of their picnic, Hiccup himself brought out a sandwich. He sat down next to the dragon with his back leaning against his side and took a bite. The salty taste of mutton along with the softness of the newly churned goat cream mixed well between the two slices of bread. With a sip of water from his leather-bag, he sighed and looked up at the sky, letting his mind slip into deep thought.

Toothless' black scales were smooth, hard, but warm and very comfortable. Hiccup could feel the dragon's breathing as it lightly rose and fell with each breath. It rocked him into a slumbering stance, and he started to daydream\*\*.\*\* He thought of Astrid, and her newly named dragon, Ærni. Naming your dragon seemed to many to be just as hard as learning to take care of them. What was one to call a previously supposed killing machine that was now one's pet? Many had asked Hiccup for guidance, but he was as lost as the rest of them.

"Take a name you feel would suite your dragon," he had answered, "Truthfully, the name will matter more to you than to your dragon. As soon as he learns it, it will be his for the keeping, despite what you choose."

"Toothless? Are you happy with your name?" Hiccup turned his eyes from the sky and looked at his friend. Toothless turned his face towards him at the mention of his name, the tail of a fish sticking out of his mouth. He reacted to the name; he seems happy with it, Hiccup thought.

"I guess you don't care too much, do you, bud?" he asked before looking back up at the sky. Hiccup was used by now to one-sided conversations with his best friend, and most of the time he was certain that Toothless understood a fair part of what he said.

"Names are more important for Vikings, I guess." He was talking just as much to himself as to Toothless, or the sky for that matter. He chewed thoughtfully on another bite of his sandwich before continuing.

"You know, in Berk, we have traditions when it comes to choosing our names. Some follow the old tradition, where the names are of power and beauty, handed down through generations. Like... like... Astrid!" He sighed again. "Astrid is such a beautiful name." Toothless shook his head a little at the mention of that girl again. "It comes from the word "As," you know, as in Asgard, the gods. And frid, it means "beauty", or "peace." Hiccup then continued to list names of people in Berk, with a quick explanation of what their name meant. He told of Sigfrid, Astrid's mother, whose name was a combination of the two words "Sig", meaning victory, and again "frid", meaning beauty or peace. Astrid's father's name, Asgun, came from "As", the gods, and "gunnr", meaning battle.

And then there was the other tradition, the one his family had yielded to. It was of a school of much more superstitious kind, where parents believed that giving their children hideous names would frighten off gnomes and trolls. He shook his head.

"Fishlegs, Snoutlot, Hiccup, I know not the most wonderful of names, but they aren't the worse. And they are our names. At least they still have some power of their own." To this, Toothless, almost finished eating, gave him another glance, which Hiccup took as a question.

"Yeah, you see, bud, names are more than just words. They have a power of their own, like runes. And the power grows as the name is carried on. When a person dies, his relatives and friends can always choose to pass the name onto a newborn, and so the character of that person will be passed on, too... or at least, that was what Gothi told us." Hiccup shook his head.

"But I don't know, I'm Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, and I carry the name of two Vikings before me, two of my ancestors. But... I don't feel any of their power." And with a little smile, he added, "But who knows? Maybe even my name will now bring something worthy of passing on. Not that I think I want to. I think I would much rather the next generation use the ancient names. Maybe..." A thought was lit in his mind, and he looked at the dragon with a bigger smile.

"Maybe now that we have you guys, we won't need hideous names to scare off gnomes and trolls." Toothless, satisfied and happy after his dinner, just purred and gave his rider a big, toothless smile. Hiccup chuckled a little and lied back against the dragon, closing his eyes.

"At least I know your name was a good pick."

\* \* \*

><p>[1] Arn is Old Norse for "eagle". The name would be Arn or Arne, but these names are still used in Swedish and therefore sound a little... odd in my ears. I change it to Arni to give it a little different flavor.<p>

\* \* \*

><p>I made this little text while preparing for the much larger chapter that will follow. Might need to hold further writing until I know what new lore the "Gift of the Night Fury", and "Book of dragons" will introduce though, we shall have to wait and see.<p>

I find it a little hard to write about these two "tradition's" of names. I don't feel comfortable with Cowell's choice of names. Instead I really do prefer the "true" way of naming a Viking, and I will continue to use real Norsemen names in my texts when I name new characters. But I did my best to try to stay true to both sides, this being her story that I'm just borrowing. And I can assure you that any name Cowell or Dreamwork has come up with will remain the same, I have no right to change those.

So, any comment on this one is appreciated. Did you like it? Found my choice of names fair? Please review. And again many blessings to LadyLore56 for her extraordinary help.

### 3. God Yule

Author's Note: I promise to make some bigger chapters, and those are under construction. They just take longer time than I expected. So in the meantime, here is a little Christmas special I made in all haste. Hope I didn't rush it too much.

I publish it today Thursday (Thor's day) the 22 of December, because today is the winter solstice and with that, the Viking holiday of Yule! (See footnote 2 for more description) So two days in advance, Merry Yule/Merry Christmas. I do not mention "Snoggletog". But if you wanna stay true to the film, you can always see Snoggletog as a longer holiday, and Yule as \_the\_ main event.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup stumbled forward on tired feet toward the front door of his house. It was early morning, there was hardly any light to light up the room, and he could have remained in his bed. But today he had promised Toothless that they would spend the whole forenoon flying.<p>

With his hand on the doorknob, he wiped his eyes yet again, let out a

big yawn, and opened the door. A steady stream of cold air met his face, and he gave a light shiver. It was below freezing outside, and he would have frozen like hell had it not been for his well-crafted Viking winter-clothes. Living in the northern part of the world for countless years had taught Vikings the need to dress warmly during the cold part of the year. With time, the needlework of Berk had developed to perfection.

Hiccup just stood there on his doorstep for a moment, taking in the cold air with deep breaths that drew any last remnants of sleepiness from his lungs and body. Morning at it was, the sun had yet to really set in the sky, and you could just see a faint light as it still lingered just beyond the horizon. The moon however, was still up, shining white and bright.

Hiccup drew one last deep breath, and laughed at the stinging feeling of his protesting lungs. Then he turned to the moon.

"You better hurry up, Mani. You're slacking behind. Be lazy like this, and the wolves will catch you[1]," he said before stepping out in the snow and heading around the house. There was a reason to why he was the first villager up. Someone had awoken him.

As he started walking, he could hear low grunting.

"Yes, Toothless, I'm here, no need to wake up Dad as well."

The dragon's head popped out around the corner of the house, and when he recognized Hiccup, he took a jump of joy before coming up to meet him.

"You know we could have slept in today," he said with sarcasm. Toothless answered by pressing his nose up under Hiccup's chin, sniffing lightly before licking his face.

"Alright, buddy, alright, we're going," he laughed, "Come on, lets see if we can catch Mani before the wolves do."

There was a reason for the moon still lingering in the sky, and the late rising of the sun. Today was the winter solstice, the day of the year when the daylight would be shortest, and the night the longest. And for Vikings, that meant today was Yule, the main event of their winter holidays[2]. It was the day when Vikings, enduring the overwhelming darkness of winter nights, would gather up and feast. It involved presents as well. It was said to the young ones that Odin himself would step down to the realm of Midgard, taking the shape of an old man with a huge white beard[3]. He would walk around from village to village, handing out gifts to whoever had proven himself worthy during the year. For many young children of Berk, that meant getting their upside - down turned helmets filled with goodies. So too, for Hiccup, although his father Stoick didn't uphold the whole Odin-charade or pretend to hide where the goodies really came from[4].

So Hiccup could share a couple of sweets he had found in his helmet that morning with Toothless. Both chewing happily, Hiccup wished his dragon a merry Yule before they took off.

A strong southern wind blew, bringing with it just a tiny bit of warm air to battle the cold that surrounded Hiccup's face as he and his

dragon flew through the sky. Warm or cold, it didn't matter right now. Hiccup was beyond that. The astonishing feeling as the wind forced your hair straight back, the weightlessness as Toothless changed altitude, the adrenalin pumping through his every vein, and the pure, happy, godlike feeling of becoming one with the sky and one with the dragon was just mind-blowing. They did tricks, looping, mindlessness playing in the air. But every now and then they went for basic practice. Balance was extremely important, Hiccup knew that for a fact ever since he lost his foot. No mater how well crafted a prosthetic fin, or foot, was, it would never be quite the same for either of them.

"You ready, bud?" he asked, bending forward and putting a hand on Toothless' head. The dragon was tense, but eager, letting out a faint grunt that Hiccup took as a yes.

"Alright buddy, just remember, I'm here the whole time. Here goes." With a click, he disengaged his prosthetic leg from the paddle that controlled Toothless fake fin. The fin itself folded along his tail, leaving only his real fin left to balance his flight. This was not the first time Hiccup and Toothless had practiced Toothless' ability to fly alone, but still Toothless let out a concerned sound as he felt the wind trying to drag his fin to make a wrong turn. He knew by now that he needed to angle his fin in a very strange upside-down angle to balance the missing support of the fake fin, and he could only take light strokes with his wings, or the force would press his tail out of control.

Every time they tried this, Hiccup could swear that his friend managed to fly a little further than last time. He would never be able to start flying over longer distances on his own, but even a dragon needed to be prepared for the unexpected and explore their limits.

"You're doing great, Toothless, just a little bit longer," was his response when the dragon made yet another sound of unease. With his hand back on the dragon's head, Toothless relaxed and took a few more light wing beats. But hardly had they made it much further when an unexpected strong wind hit them from the rear. Toothless lost control of his fin, the tail jerked in the wrong angle, and he lost altitude. No matter how hard he tried to maintain his course, he couldn't do anything but scream as they dove through the air.

As quickly as he could, Hiccup reattached his leg to the paddle, letting the red fake fin unfold and restore balance to Toothless' flight.

"Great job, bud, that was very good work. I'm so proud of you!"

\* \* \*

><p>The daylight ended early, and the Vikings of Berk gathered up in the Great Hall for a feast of special magnificence. Hiccup was there, sitting by a table with Astrid by his side, their hands intertwined under the table. Across them sat the twins, Ruffnut and Tuffnut. Beside Astrid was Fishlegs, and opposite him, Snotlout, all deep in conversation about dragon training. The hall was filled to the brink with every Viking in the village, as well as many dragons that refused to wait outside. Toothless laid on the floor by Hiccup's feet.</p>

Stoick gave a Yule speech about the year that had past, and the year to come. Gothi told of ancient lore and stories about the time of the year. But it was really the dinner feast itself they were all waiting for.

The main course was pork, a traditionally important meat on the table at Yule as a symbol of the everlasting pig SÃ¶hrÃ—mnir[5]. Pork was a luxury the village of Berk could muster just a few times every year, since they only bred sheep and had to buy all the pigs from far off. This year had been very prosperous after the ending of the war, and every table in the Great Hall ended up with a whole prepared pig of their own, stuffed with the most amazing filling and presented on a bed of vegetables. The pig even had a red apple in its mouth, to the entertainment of the waiting Vikings. The cooks of Berk had not been idle this Yule; there was enough to satisfy even the most greedy Viking, with bread for all and some to spare.

As soon as the food was presented on Hiccup's table, Ruffnut and Tuffnut launched themselves for the knife and the first bite. They grabbed the knife simultaneously, and with a quick glance at each other, threw themselves into yet another twin-fight, unaware that the best part of the pig was being picked out by the others around the table.

Hiccup, who manage to get a hold of a huge slice, cut out a part and handed it to Toothless on a plate of his own on the floor.

"Here you go, buddy. I know you don't prefer cooked food, but give this a chance. It's actually pretty good."

Toothless sniffed suspiciously at the piece on the table. Hiccup was right; he normally preferred to eat his meat raw. But then again, there was something strange about this pork. It smelled... different, yet almost tasty. He gave the piece of meat a small, hesitant lick, and quickly withdrew his tongue. What was that taste? Salty, yes sweet. Moist somehow, and... quite delicious! He brought out his retractable teeth, and took a bite. He chewed slowly at first, but with every bite, his pace quickened.

Hiccup was listening to Astrid. He hand held up his face as his elbow rested on the table. It hadn't been long, but he had already lost track of what she was talking about. Not that it was boring, he just got so distracted observing her face as she talked. How her lips moved, how her eyes shone, how her graceful hair danced on her forehead. She laughed, probably at something she had said. He hadn't listen, but he found himself laughing with her. Not a fake laugh to pretend he had, he just felt sincere happiness when Astrid was.

He was interrupted by Toothless, nudging him from the side.

"Oh, hi bud, what's up?" he asked, scratching Toothless behind his ear. The dragon just looked at him pleadingly.

"What is it, did you enjoy your meal?" Hiccup asked, a bit confused.

"I think he did," said Astrid, pointing to the cleaned plate on the floor.

"See, I told you it would taste good," said Hiccup.

Toothless just continued staring up at Hiccup, looking at Hiccup's plate and back. Hiccup followed his line of sight to the plate, and back to the dragon.

"What? You want... no. No! Toothless I already gave you a fair share, this is my piece of the ration!" said Hiccup.

Toothless' pupils grew, and he started to make a sad, pleading sound as he fixed eye contact with Hiccup.

"Oh great, he's doing puppy eyes. Fine!" he sighed, "I'll give you half of what I got, but the rest is mine, I tell you."

Toothless caught the meat in the air as Hiccup tossed it over and began chewing on it slowly, to make it last as long as possible. Hiccup smiled and patted him on the side.

"God Yule[6], buddy," he said with his face turned to the dragon, away from the table.

"And god Yule to you, Hiccup" he got as an answer when he turned back. His plate had been pushed aside, and in front of him were a bundle of fabrics. Astrid was beaming brightly at him, waiting eagerly for him to open his present. Hiccup unfolded the fabric and found a pair of working gloves inside. The leather was of a very good quality, and as he tried them on, they fit perfectly.

"Wow," was all he could say at first, "They...are perfect. Thank you, Astrid," he said finally, turning to face her.

"Yeah, well, I don't want to catch you working barehanded in that forge again, okay?" she said a little defensively, "There are no excuses for getting burned like you do." Hiccup smiled to this, leaning in to thank her yet again. Astrid closed her eyes and waited for the kiss that should come. Only, it didn't. A little surprised and annoyed, she opened her eyes to demand a response, but instead found that her own plate had now been pushed aside.

Before her laid a pouch, designed, made, and decorated by Hiccup himself. With big eyes she held it up to observe the carving and pattern that decorated it.

"I didn't know what to give you," began Hiccup, defending his choice of gift as well, "But I thought you wanted something more useful than jewelry, and I"-

He was interrupted by Astrid, who shut him up by pulling him close to her for a kiss.

"It's beautiful, thank you. And god Yule," she said, resting her forehead on his and looking him deep in his eyes.

"God Yule, Astrid," he answered, before kissing her again.

"Hey, you know we're still eating over here?" complained Snoutlout.

"Yeah? Like you don't like watching," responded Tuffnut.

They where all interrupted by a strange noise, followed by a tremendous cheering. As they looked around, they noticed a group of Vikings in one corner, seeming to have had a little to much Yule-ale, who had gone up on a table, and with hands on each other's backs, they started to sing[7]. All the teens could do was stare. In no way was this an unpleasant song to hear; it was just a little odd to look at. There were no words in the song, just voices, rising and falling.

They laughed and cheered with the rest of the hall when the song ended. As Hiccup turned his attention back to the table, two things where missing.

Toothless was gone, and his plate was empty.

\* \* \*

><p>Notes:</p>

[1] I have mention Mani the moon-god, and how the sun and moon are being chased by wolfs before in my first chapter. Read that for further information.

[2]Yule, or as I pronounce it, Jul, is my (Swedish) word for Christmas. But it is in fact a Old Norse word, meaning "feast". Yule was Vikings version of Christmas, celebrated on the winter solstice.

[3] In many ways dose Odin reminds one of Santa. He was said to take the shape of a old man with white beard that came down to earth and handed out presents during Yule. The flying reindeer sleigh that Santa has, might be a old remnants of Thor's sleigh, driven by horned goats or reindeer depending on what story you connect to. Now I'm not saying Odin is the figure behind the legend of Santa. Just pointing out that there is some resemblance.

[4] Putting sweets in ones helmet, like some western countries do today in large knitted socks are not a "real" Viking tradition. I made that up to connect to the movie GotNF.

[5] SÃ¶hrÃ¶mnir is the name of a pig that every night is slaughtered to provide food for the feasts of Valhalla. Every morning the pig resurrects and thus proceeds in a never ending circle until the end of the world.

[6] As I said Yule is Viking's version of Christmas. God jul, or god yule, means merry yule/Christmas. I know "god" means something different for you, but I couldn't stand using merry. It gets to much "Christian Christmas" for me. Hope you can stand me using a little more Vikingish word. :)

[7] You MUST listen to this Youtube clip while continue reading. Open up Youtube and add: /watch?v=T4GAHpdQ3ks " to the address.

The clip is taken from the introduction music to the movie Ronja RÃ¶vardotter.

\* \* \*

><p>Author's Note: Got one other chapter close to finish, and hopefully I will have time to publish it sometime after Christmas. As always I'm looking forward to your thoughts about my text. Love it? Hate it? Think I describe Viking lore in a fair manner? Let me know.</p>

As always, many thanks to my beta-reviewer LadyLore56.

End  
file.